

From: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

## Americans know surprisingly little about their government, survey finds

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PHILADELPHIA – Americans show great uncertainty when it comes to answering basic questions about how their government works, a national survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania has found.

The survey of 1,416 adults, released for Constitution Day (Sept. 17) in conjunction with the launch of the [Civics Renewal Network](#), found that:

- While little more than a third of respondents (36 percent) could name all three branches of the U.S. government, just as many (35 percent) could not name a single one.
- Just over a quarter of Americans (27 percent) know it takes a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate to override a presidential veto.
- One in five Americans (21 percent) incorrectly thinks that a 5-4 Supreme Court decision is sent back to Congress for reconsideration.

“Although surveys reflect disapproval of the way Congress, the President and the Supreme Court are conducting their affairs, the Annenberg survey demonstrates that many know surprisingly little about these branches of government,” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) (APPC). “This survey offers dramatic evidence of the need for more and better civics education.”

### The Civics Renewal Network

To address the problem, APPC and 25 other nonpartisan organizations, including the [Library of Congress](#), the [National Constitution Center](#), the [U.S. Courts](#), the [National Archives](#), and the [Newseum](#), announced the launch of the [Civics Renewal Network](#), a unique partnership among some of the nation’s leaders in civics education. The network offers free, high-quality resources for teachers through the one-stop website [www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org](http://www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org).

The Civics Renewal Network is celebrating Constitution Day with coast-to-coast activities and running public service ads in some major television markets encouraging viewers to learn about the Constitution. The ads can be seen on YouTube [here](#) and [here](#).

In a first, the U.S. Courts are holding [27 naturalization ceremonies](#) at iconic sites from Maine to Alaska. Students at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and more than 550 schools nationwide will take the [“Preamble Challenge,”](#) reciting the 52-word Preamble to the Constitution. An [American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#) symposium at the [Newseum’s](#) Knight Conference Center in Washington, D.C., will examine the role of civics in American life, followed by a keynote address from new National Endowment for the Humanities chairman William “Bro” Adams. Those events will be video-streamed by the Academy [here](#). The full day’s schedule can be found on the APPC site [here](#). A 10:30 a.m. news conference by the Civics Renewal Network also will be video-streamed [on its site](#).

### **Most Americans do not know which parties control the House and Senate**

The study also found that more than half of Americans do not know which party controls the House and Senate:

- Asked which party has the most members in the House of Representatives, 38 percent said they knew the Republicans are the majority, but 17 percent responded the Democrats, and 44 percent reported that they did not know (up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).
- Asked which party controls the Senate, 38 percent correctly said the Democrats, 20 percent said the Republicans, and 42 percent said they did not know (also up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).

For the complete release on the survey, [click here](#). For additional information on methodology and data, [click here](#).

Link: <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-know-surprisingly-little-about-their-government-survey-finds/>